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FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5548
INFO RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 0253
RUEHHE/AMEMBASSY HELSINKI 0192
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 6897
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 4970
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 3580
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 0702
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO 3668
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA 0998
RUEHTC/AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE 0325
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 2748
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI 7469
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI 5184
RUEHON/AMCONSUL TORONTO 0123
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1855
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RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC
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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 COLOMBO 000342

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STATE FOR SCA/INS, USPACOM FOR FPA

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [ASEC](#) [PREL](#) [CE](#)

SUBJECT: LTTE HEAD REGRETS ARTILLERY FIRE ON AMBASSADOR
DURING BATTICALOA TRIP

REF: COLOMBO 337

Classified By: Ambassador Robert O. Blake, Jr. for reasons
1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (S) SUMMARY: On February 28, Ambassador Blake received a faxed letter (full text para 2) dated February 27, 2007, from S.P. Tamilselvan, Head of the Political Division, LTTE, apologizing for the February 27 artillery attack on the delegation in which the Ambassador was traveling to Batticaloa (reftel). Comment: Since this is now the second delegation led by Samarasinghe that has come under fire from the LTTE, we will likely refrain from joining similar missions in the future. While we do not believe the LTTE intentionally targeted the Ambassadors, the LTTE clearly was aware that a high level GSL mission would be coming to Batticaloa to meet with civil society and other representatives. Their decision to shell a group that was seeking to address the same humanitarian and human rights problems that the LTTE claims to be concerned about, reflects the ruthless and cynical attitude of the LTTE. END SUMMARY.

12. (U) Begin text.

Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam

27.02.2007

HE Robert Blake,
The Ambassador of United States,
Colombo.

Yours Excellency,

I write to express my deep sadness and shock that you were slightly hurt in an artillery fire on 27 February 2007, as the air craft carrying you and others landed in military air bases in Batticaloa. We truly regret the unfortunate incident.

Please allow us to explain the circumstances that led to this unfortunate incident. The two landing sites where the air crafts, carrying you and other ambassadors, landed are Sri Lankan military artillery positions. Early on that day, Sri Lankan military launched artillery shelling into our areas in Batticaloa provoking us to fire back. Such shelling into our area occurs regularly and is continuing to create new IDPs on a daily basis.

We like to inform you that we have well established and effective channels of communication with UN and ICRC for informing us about the movements of foreign diplomats and delegates into war zones. This arrangement has worked well to ensure the safety of diplomats who have to travel into war zones in the course of their duties. Indeed, foreign diplomats, UN and INGO staff regularly fly to the Palaly military air base in Jaffna after informing us through this well established channel.

The failure of the Sri Lankan Government (GoSL) to follow this well established practice is criminal negligence on their part. We are forced to think that GoSL deliberately avoided this practice and put your safety and the safety of the other ambassadors in jeopardy in order to ruin the relationship of the Tamil people with your country.

Fortunately, prompt action by UN staff and our staff at our Head Quarters in Kilinochchi has avoided serious harm to the foreign diplomats.

Please allow me to use this opportunity to say how much the
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Tamil people and LTTE value the good relationship with your country and recognize the concerns you show for the welfare of the Tamil people.

Thanking Your,
Yours Sincerely,

/s/
(S.P. Tamilselvan)
Head of Political Division,
Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam

End text.

COMMENT

13. (S) We have confirmed that there was an outgoing artillery barrage from the Sri Lankan military into the jungles west of Batticaloa on the morning for February 27th. This is not an unusual occurrence; the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) has told us that artillery barrages into the jungles west of Batticaloa are practically a daily occurrence. The LTTE letter does not specifically allege that the fire came from the helicopter landing sites. (Note: It is not likely that the Tigers have a technical ability to locate the source of the incoming fire, but they may very well have spotters with radios or cell phones in the vicinity. This appeared to be the case in this instance, as the incoming mortars landed progressively closer to the arriving delegation.) To avoid recurrences of this unfortunate incident, RSO plans to set in place a notification procedure to either the UN security liaison or the Sri Lankan Monitoring Mission liaison in Kilinochchi for future Ambassadorial and high-level visits to the conflict zone.

14. (S) The idea for this trip was originated by Human Rights and Resettlement Minister Samarasinghe, who is making a good faith effort to address humanitarian and human rights problems. However, this is now the second delegation led by

Samarasinghe that has come under fire from the LTTE. The first was a mission to Jaffna several weeks ago that the US did not participate in. We will likely refrain from joining similar missions with high level GSL officials in the future.

While we do not believe the LTTE intentionally targeted the Ambassadors, the LTTE likely was aware that a high level GSL mission would be coming to Batticaloa to meet with civil society and other representatives. Their decision to shell a group that was seeking to address the same humanitarian and human rights problems that the LTTE claims to be concerned about, reflects the ruthless and cynical attitude of the LTTE.

BLAKE